

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yoshio Noguchi, 74, coffee miller and co-op manager

"Always, we give 'em better price than other guys. Competition, that, you cannot help. So, then, we form a cooperative--farmers. Farmers, [if] each individual, they cannot make money. Form a cooperative, then you come strong. . . Twenty years ago, I was worrying about the labor, harvesting costs. So, I told to the [coffee] farmers, 'Why don't you guys change to macadamia nut?' Today, our members, they produce--in money value--mac nut more than coffee. So, gradually, the coffee going."

Yoshio Noguchi, Japanese, was born on January 3, 1907 in Spreckelsville, Maui, and spent his early childhood in Ka'u, Hawaii. In 1916, he and his family moved to Kona, where his father became a coffee farmer.

In 1928, Yoshio and others formed a coffee milling corporation. After only two years, the corporation went bankrupt. Yoshio then acquired his own mill.

In the early 1960s, he converted his mill into a farmers' cooperative. Today, the Pacific Coffee Cooperative is one of only two in Kona. Yoshio presently serves as its manager. He lives in Captain Cook with his wife, Shizue.

Tape No. 9-62-1-81
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Yoshio Noguchi (YN)
January 29, 1981
Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii
BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Yoshio Noguchi. Today is January 29, 1981, and we're at his office at the Pacific Coffee Cooperative in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii.

Mr. Noguchi, when were you born?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

YN: January [3]. [YN was born on April 15, 1906, but legally had his date of birth changed to January 3, 1907. Since these two dates appeared on his birth records for reasons explained below, YN chose to make the latter date his official date of birth.]

WN: What year?

YN: Nineteen six [1906]. Those days, one year difference, you know. Because, you know, our parents, right away, they didn't register the. . . . The old guys [i.e., issei], when they come, they [eventually] want to go home back to Japan. So, they registered me in Japan [with the] consulate.

WN: Oh, you mean, they followed the Japanese system?

YN: Yeah. So, one year was different. And then, I change 'em legally in. . . .

WN: Oh, so, before, had you as 1905?

YN: No, 1907. Not only me, now. Plenty. Plenty guys, too. They don't want to pay a penalty of one dollar, eh?

WN: What penalty?

YN: Because you didn't register.

WN: Register with the Japanese consulate?

YN: Yeah. And those days, one dollar is big money, you know. (Laughs)
That's what I hear.

WN: So, when you had 'em changed to [January 3, 1907]?

YN: I forgot that, no? Way, way back, though. The government want to know my age [i.e., YN needed an official birth certificate]. You got to register in the Japan custom, so they call 'em and they got 'em [changed to January 3, 1907]. (Chuckles)

WN: So, where were you born?

YN: Spreckelsville, Maui.

WN: And then, the same year, when you were less than one year old, you moved to Ka'u? What were your parents doing in Ka'u?

YN: The plantation. Those days, only sugar plantation, eh? And, gee, I hate to say everything, but when I born--my father died before I born. And then, my mother married to another man. So, they moved from Maui to Ka'u, Kapapala. Those days, my real parents was Amano. My mother [later] married to Inouye. And then, today, I'm Noguchi because Noguchi adopted me [at age 10]. We had one, two, three, four, oh, five kids [in the family], I think. Yeah, five.

WN: Five brothers and sisters in the family?

YN: Yes. They adopted one, the small one. (Chuckles)

WN: Noguchi, your father, the person who adopted you, was from where?

YN: In Kona. (He was born in Kumamoto, Japan.)

WN: From Kona? That's why you came Kona when you were ten years old?

YN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Before you came Kona, when you were growing up in Ka'u, what you remembered about Ka'u? Like what kind house you lived in?

YN: Ah. . . . What you call that? Plantation house, eh? Nowadays, we don't see those houses. (Laughs)

WN: You mean, the bathroom was somewhere else?

YN: One, yeah. Long [houses], they used to call 'em "nagaya" or something like that. So, everybody get one room or one or two rooms.

WN: As a boy, what kind things you did to have good time?

YN: I went to school until my age was 14. And then, I have to work in the coffee land.

- WN: So, you came Kona because you were adopted by Mr. Noguchi. What you thought about coming to Kona? You rather have Ka'u or what?
- YN: No, those days, [I was] only ten [years old]. You have to depend on your parents, that's all. Nowadays, ten years old, [children are] pretty smart, yeah? (Laughs)
- WN: Where did you live in Kona?
- YN: Over here.
- WN: Captain Cook?
- YN: This place [Pacific Coffee Cooperative].
- WN: Oh, where the mill is now?
- YN: We used to have about 15 acres. We used to live about 500 feet [from the mill]. Old house. There's still somebody living there. So, when I made money, I got married [in 1935] and made the house.
- WN: How did your father get the land for his 15 acres coffee?
- YN: Lease. We used to lease. I forgot how many years ago. When I was a kid, about [age] 14 or 15. The owner used to be haole, but he was a bon-san [priest], I think. Missionary or something. So, he used to move from Hawaii to Europe, like that. He had about 150 acres of land. [The] Waterhouse [family] used to take care [i.e., were caretakers of the land]. But [when] that bon-san left, he left his card. On the back [it said that] if you want to buy this land, you could. So, right away--I call about six guys--they trying to buy. So, six guys, we bought this 150 acres. From the top [upper lands] to the bottom [lower lands].
- WN: And it was [previously] owned by this bon-san?
- YN: Yeah. I don't know the name already. So, two guys went Honolulu with Waterhouse. They [Waterhouse] said they willing to sell. So, we bought.
- WN: "We" means your father?
- YN: Yeah, my father and five or six guys. Fifteen acres, we bought. And one had about six acres, thry bought that one. Some guys down here was 18 acres, 20 acres. Those days, we had one Japanese [who] used to be a surveyor. Just he graduate from the college. He didn't have the license, but he can do that. We need somebody, no?
- WN: So, that's how you folks parceled out the land?
- YN: Yeah, parcel. And the one we [were] staying [on], we bought. The rest, we sold to McCandless. We had to sell, you know. McCandless

[land] was this side; ours was this side.

WN: Alongside McCandless?

YN: Yeah. Get the stone wall [which was the boundary between McCandless' land and Noguchi's land], but was all broken. So, they start to build the stone wall. Then, they say, "You guys have to pay half."

Cost big money, eh? So, "Instead of we build the stone wall, how's about you guys buy the [land]?" So, we sold 'em [to McCandless].

WN: How come McCandless told you folks you had to pay half for the stone wall?

YN: I don't know. Must be the law in Hawaii. If boundary, both sides have to.

WN: Oh, I see. So, McCandless owned land next to your folks' land? And they were going to build boundary between your land and their land?

YN: Yeah, they started, eh? (Laughs)

WN: Instead of paying half, you guys sold 'em?

YN: Sold 'em, yeah.

WN: How many acres you sold?

YN: Forgot, though. I think, hundred something acres. That's small money, eh? I think was \$10 a acre, something like that. McCandless sold to, now, Greenwell. That's why, I think, Greenwell have that land now.

WN: This land goes from where to where?

YN: From the mountain. Way up, way up. And [down] to the beach. In Hawaii, when the king gave the land, [it was] always from the mountain to the beach. Especially in Kona.

WN: What land was better? Down ma kai or up ma uka?

YN: No, the place we have coffee, no make difference. About 2,000 feet, from that, this ma uka is all good for nothing. Too cold. At the most [highest], coffee, we can plant about 2,000 [feet] elevation. Way up there is about 5,000 feet.

WN: But you folks had land up above 2,000 [feet] elevation?

YN: Yeah.

WN: So, nobody used it?

- YN: Nobody. So, we sold that. Ma uka side, we sold to one haole. And they sold to somebody. Now, I don't know who [owns it].
- WN: So, out of all the 150 acres that the German minister had, how much did your father actually end up owning?
- YN: From this land, we had, I think, two lot. Near to the coffee, so [it was] divided [into] small--about three acres or four acres. I think four acres. So, we get the four acres. Four acres, and one near the beach. Everybody, they got about two shares or three shares.
- WN: Everybody was Japanese?
- YN: All Japanese, all Japanese. Now, it's nothing, but those days, [it was] big money. (Laughs) Big money.
- WN: For the total, 150 acres, about how much those people paid?
- YN: Let's see. It was about. . . . \$240 [per] acre. Two hundred forty dollars. We had 15 acres, so we paid for that. Some guys had eight acres, six acres. We, of the Japanese, [were] the first guys bought the real estate, you know. Way back, nobody think of those kind thing, eh?
- WN: Everybody was leasing, huh?
- YN: Leasing.
- WN: How your father got the money to buy this land? All through coffee?
- YN: We have to work, eh? So, one year, [we made] maybe \$100, \$200. We had enough to pay [for] the land, but we spent all. So, the rest, they didn't have the money to buy. They borrow from the bank, they couldn't pay [back]. They give up to the bank. And then, the bank sold the land to these owners over here. No more original guys [anymore]. Somebody bought that from bank.
- WN: But prior to your father buying the land, he leased?
- YN: Yeah. And that German guy leased to Hind. Then, we bought the land. Now, they tell me, "You guys have to sell." Either side, we going be the boss. [First] we lease from those guys, (chuckles) but now, belong to us. They give for us cheap, though. But in those days, no more money, eh? Lucky, I had the money, that's why. And that land, you'll be surprised, boy. Until 1940, land value was same. (Chuckles) You believe that? Nineteen forty, only.
- WN: You mean, same all the way through?
- YN: Yeah, same, same. So, my old man [in] 1940 want to go back Japan. So, he tell me, "Eh, give me \$1,500. I give you all the land, 15

acres free."

WN: For \$1,500?

YN: Yeah, yeah. So, I say, "No, no, no. You don't have to. I give you \$1,500." And so, 15 acres, I kept it for how long already? For the same price, we sold 'em to one schoolteacher. Konawaena no schoolteacher. I forgot the name now. He bought for that. And then, he made money gradually. Subdivide shite, no? I sold 12 acres. I keep three acres. He sold to other guy, and two guys own. So, lucky, those guys, they own the land. Around here, nobody [else] own the land.

WN: Still yet?

YN: Yeah. All lease under Bishop Estate or one Portuguese, Henriques. Now, they subdividing. Two hundred acres, so one acre [here], one acre [there]. You know how much they selling [for]? Thirty thousand [dollars], that's house, lot.

WN: Thirty thousand for house and lot?

YN: Yeah. And the ones who bought, they speculate and they sold for \$50,000. That was 60 acres. Then, those guys bought and then they sold to other guys for \$80,000. So, around here, we don't have real estate. Practically nothing. The Portuguese used to have the 200 acres. He sold to this capitalist from Texas.

WN: So, your father had the 15 acres, then, till 1941, then?

YN: Yeah, 1941, no?

WN: So, when you were on your father's coffee land, what kind things you did on the land?

YN: Farming only. (Chuckles) Pick coffee. We used to call hō hana. Those days, we don't have chemical [weed killers].

WN: You got paid for that?

YN: Yeah, I getting paid--kaukau. (Laughs)

WN: But you never get anything per bag?

YN: No.

WN: Your father had a pulper on his land?

YN: No, no. So, [for] one year, we [sold coffee] to Captain Cook [Mill, owned by] the Hind [family]. [After one year] we make the drying platform and equipment.

WN: You folks had?

YN: Yeah, we bought.

WN: For. . . .

YN: Those days, only about, at the most, I think, four or five hundred dollars, equipment.

WN: So, you folks could make parchment, then?

YN: Yeah, yeah. So, only one year, we don't.

WN: So, for the first year, you sold cherry?

YN: Yeah, cherry.

WN: How much per bag?

YN: In those days, that year was pretty good. I think, dollar quarter [\$1.25] was, 100-pound cherry. Around that.

WN: What about parchment?

YN: Parchment was about four cents.

WN: Four cents a pound?

YN: Pound.

WN: And then, the parchment, who did you sell the parchment to?

YN: Used to be Hind [i.e., Captain Cook Coffee Company] before I made this mill.

WN: So, with your father, you sold to Hind?

YN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: In 1927, you [helped] start a coffee corporation. How did that get started?

YN: You know [Takumi] Kudo? He was my father's cousin. We ship parchment over there. And I was shareholder, too. And then, [it went] bankrupt. (Laughs)

WN: After two years?

YN: After two years.

WN: Who were stockholders of this coffee corporation?

YN: One Japanese man. He is the biggest shareholder. And then, I go in. Five thousand dollars, I borrowed from bank [for] the share. And [then it went] bankrupt and lost everything. Even have to pay the bank--only interest, I used to pay. So, when bankrupt, I have to owe, eh? Then, [in 1929] I go in [milling] business and I made money, so I pay back right away. One crack, no? The bank manager, he doesn't believe me. I say, "I going to pay."

"How many percent you going?"

"I going pay everything." (Laughs)

WN: Okay, I want to get into that--how you made that money in 1929--pretty soon, but right now, I want to talk about the corporation. Was it easy to get loan from the bank in those days?

YN: We had the land, and how many guys, no? My brother, my father's friend, Koshi, and. . . . Four guys have to sign in those days. And then, you borrow.

WN: Your father was in the corporation, too?

YN: Yeah. Those days, I [was] working over there, but the old man [Kudo] was the owner. Probably you met Kudo already? He made the mill and everything. So, I was the sucker. (Laughs) But I tell to my wife, no, I wasn't sucker. I learned about the coffee business. Like you paying tuition, eh?

Oh, yeah, not \$5,000. [We lost \$8,000.] We borrowed from [the bank] \$5,000. Coffee, we take 'em over there [to Kudo's mill]. Bankrupt shita, they don't pay [us], eh? That [coffee] was worth \$3,000. In those days, \$8,000 big money, though.

WN: How come you folks decided to start the corporation?

YN: That corporation? Kudo made one. So, I was working [for him]. I want to go in business, eh? Farming coffee erai [tiring], yeah? (Laughs)

WN: How come you wanted business?

YN: Only I went fourth grade, you know. So, I have to study, eh? Nowadays, I don't take, but used to have. . . . What was? This is a paper in Washington.

WN: Oh, Wall Street Journal?

YN: Wall Street Journal, yeah.

WN: You read that?

YN: Yeah. Those days, was cheap. And then, that Wall Street [Journal],

everything business. Only coffee [matters], not too much. I sent a letter to San Francisco. "About coffee, you can get any kind information?"

"Oh, yeah. You can get." So, we getting now this. (YN takes out sheet of information.)

WN: Oh, Complete Coffee Coverage.

YN: Yeah. Then, you know where you standing [regarding coffee prices].

WN: Did you do that when you were in the corporation?

YN: No, after I started my mill [in 1929]. At first, I used to have the Wall Street Journal. Then, I didn't show to nobody. Until we form a cooperative. Then, I tell 'em--the cooperative members. Oh, otherwise, you don't know where you standing.

WN: Who told you about this?

YN: My broker in San Francisco.

WN: When you folks [had] the corporation with Kudo, you folks before were selling the coffee to . . .

YN: Hind.

WN: Captain Cook, yeah? Hind. How they felt about that? Losing customer? Because you not going sell to them anymore. They tell you folks anything like. . . .

YN: No, no. Because we used to have Hawaii Coffee Mill--Wing [Hing].

WN: Hawaii Coffee Mill didn't mind you folks starting your own mill?

YN: This is a free world, eh? (Laughs)

WN: This corporation, who did you buy coffee from?

YN: Farmers. Independent farmers, eh? Those days, not all independent. They used to have the Hawaii Coffee Mill, and Hind, and what was that? Hind and one more--American Factors.

WN: So, how you folks convinced farmers to sell to you folks?

YN: Easy. Always, we give 'em better price than other guys. Competition, that, you cannot help. So, then, we form a cooperative [i.e., Pacific Coffee Cooperative]--farmers. Farmers, [if] each individual, they cannot make money. Form a cooperative, then you come strong. More like in Mainland. Sunkist--terrific. Twenty years ago, I was worrying about the labor, harvesting costs. So, I told to the farmers, "Why don't you guys change to mac [macadamia] nut?"

Today, our members, they produce--in money value--mac nut more than coffee. So, gradually, the coffee going. Not all, but practically. . . . The big farmers, all, they change to . . .

WN: How come mac nut is more profitable than coffee?

YN: Harvesting. If young couple, at least 20 acres, they can run.

WN: Two people?

YN: Two--couple. Harvesting. They don't pay nothing. Coffee, couple, how they can? You cannot harvest one acre. You cannot. All the big ones, "Oh, I telling you folks, there's no future in coffee, so change to mac nut." So, practically no more nothing [coffee] already. Mac nut.

WN: Oh, yeah? All mac nut? All the members of the Pacific Co-op . . .

YN: The big ones [farmers], yeah. Gradually, no more. Practically, every year they planted [macadamia nuts]. So, within ten years, no more coffee.

WN: You think no more coffee in ten years?

YN: Yeah, yeah. Our members. But they coming old, you know. The young kids, they don't want farming. They go to America [i.e., Mainland] or Honolulu. No more young guys in Kona. So, who running farming? All, makule--our age.

WN: Okay. Getting back to that [corporation], you said you folks went bankrupt, yeah, in 1929?

YN: Nineteen twenty-nine. Yeah, yeah.

WN: How come you went bankrupt?

YN: We cannot pay, so bank. . . . If you cannot pay, the bank going. . . . They force you to . . .

WN: How come you guys couldn't pay? What went wrong?

YN: I hate to say this, but how to run, eh?

WN: You mean, management wasn't too good?

YN: Yeah.

WN: You folks were giving higher prices than Captain Cook and American Factors, eh?

YN: Oh, always. We have to. For instance, if Hind pay four cents [a pound], we pay four and a half cents--half cents more.

WN: Was that a main reason for you folks going bankrupt?

YN: (Laughs) I don't want to. . . . Because I'm a shareholder, too, and I was assistant manager, eh? (Laughs)

WN: So, from that experience, what you learned?

YN: Coffee business. The main thing, coffee business. How you going to sell. The main thing, sell the product.

WN: So, in 1929, when you had your own coffee mill . . .

YN: Yeah, already.

WN: . . . what things did you do differently this time, compared to the corporation time?

YN: The main thing is the market. You get the good price. That's the only thing. So, [in order] to get that, you have to study. First, I used Cambron--C.G. Cambron. Old outfit, you know. Now, one big outfit in New York, they bought out, so today, we don't have C.G. Cambron. After that, B.C. Ireland.

WN: What was his name?

YN: B.C. Ireland. I made him our agent, so he sold for us. And then, it [was] a corporation, but only two guys. I forgot the [other] name. B.C. Ireland died, so other partner, he's not so good. So, I quit [selling to] that guy. Now, today, we selling to this outfit--Superior [Tea & Coffee Company].

WN: So, when you started your own coffee mill in 1929, you got agents on the Mainland to sell your coffee for you?

YN: Yeah. For the Mainland. And over here [Hawaii], we used to sell to Wing Coffee [Company].

WN: What advantages were there in having an agent on the Mainland sell for you?

YN: We don't know nothing. So, we have to leave up to a broker--we call "broker." After that B.C. Ireland, I used to give to E.A. Johnson. That is a big outfit, too.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So, how much did you buy this coffee mill for?

YN: This? Two thousand [dollars], I forgot already. Around there.

WN: From who?

YN: I put [i.e., YN had it built]. Over here--nothing over here--used to be coffee [lands]. I need the mill, so I have to make. Cost about little over \$2,000. Building and equipment.

WN: How did you get that money?

YN: Bank. First, I used to borrow from Bank of Hawaii. Then--in those days, they used to call "Bishop."

WN: First Hawaiian, eh? [The former name of First Hawaiian Bank was Bishop Bank.]

YN: Yeah. The manager over there, [Francis] Cushingam--ima old man--he used to [lend]. Because he knows I work like hell, eh? So, he loan us the money. Five thousand [dollars], way back. And I didn't pay for long time the bank. Nanbo ka? Just leave 'em. So, they can make the interest. But the auditor grumble to Cushingam. So, Cushingam say, "Eh, Yoshi, might as well you pay 'em." So, I pay 'em.

WN: Oh, without the interest?

YN: No, no. [With] interest.

WN: What about the previous loan you made, Bank of Hawaii? When you paid that off?

YN: Oh, yeah. Because I made the money all (laughs) at once.

WN: You made good your first year at your own mill? Nineteen twenty-nine?

YN: Yeah, that year we made. But before that, too, I made. They used to call, "Japanese coffee mill" [Kona Coffee Mill, Ltd.] in Kailua.

WN: You made money from that?

YN: Yeah. I lease over there, one year. I lease.

WN: Oh, I see. So, after you went bankrupt with the corporation, you leased the Japanese coffee mill in Kailua?

YN: Yeah, Kailua. Because the manager used to be my friend. Ima demo he used to run. Lease was small. And he run for me, everything. Buying, too. I give him commission--five cents.

WN: So, how you made so much money? You made how much? Four thousand dollars in one year? In 1929? How you did that?

YN: Speculation, eh? American Factors and those buggas, they used to make money. As long as we get the agent, broker, in San Francisco, we know the price. And we get this. (YN points to sheet of paper.)

WN: Oh, you mean, the sheet that tells about the coffee prices?

YN: Price. Every day, eh? Every day. We have to know the situation. Every day, you have to know. So, main thing, every day, you look.

WN: Check the sheet?

YN: Yeah. (YN examines paper.) Oh, here. Over here. Down or up. What this? Down, yeah?

WN: Oh, so you knew when coffee prices were good? But you would wait until it went up and then sell it?

YN: Yeah, yeah. And then, when you read this for one week, you can tell, go up or down. Not only the price. Maybe the coffee guys, some guys, they give advice--how and this. That is the main thing. Sometimes, you never can tell. The big guys, they going speculate, you know. So, you have to watch that. Like General Foods.

WN: General Foods?

YN: Yeah, General Foods the biggest one. They had quite a bit of coffee. Sell the coffee all over. Cheap, bring 'em down, bring 'em down. Then, the market go down, down, down. When it go way down, they grab 'em, everything.

WN: They what?

YN: All the coffee from Brazil and Colombia. They ship 'em out. Price go down, then they grab that. They buy everything.

WN: They buy the Brazil?

YN: The one they ship to New York. Really, speculation, it's a crook, but that's honest. So, always, we have to watch the big guys.

WN: So, 1929, this is when coffee prices were low, eh?

YN: Yeah, low.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Nineteen twenty-nine, how much was, about? You told me, four cents?

YN: Parchment, four cents [a pound], no?

WN: So, you made \$4,000 in one year, in 1929, by speculation. You got one agent on the Mainland to help you. Did other millers at that time do the same kind of thing?

YN: No, [they were] local, eh? This Hawaii Coffee Mill, they had a roaster in Honolulu. Yeah, had how many Japanese [owned] mills, no? They used to sell to American Factors.

WN: But you sold direct to . . .

YN: Yeah, the Mainland.

WN: So, only you made money that time?

YN: Oh, yeah. Even, those days, American Factors lost money, too.

WN: With that money you got from leasing that coffee mill in Kailua, you could build your own mill over here?

YN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: What was the name of the mill? Your mill over here?

YN: This one? First, when I own, eh? (YN shows WN old invoice.)

WN: Oh, "International Coffee Mill"?

YN: Yeah. But, those days, [I was] not the owner. My old man.

WN: You folks owned the land already, yeah?

YN: Yeah. And you know why I don't want to run on my name? Because of that Kudo's over there [went] bankrupt. They foreclose. If I had this mill, they might grab our mill, too. We never pay everything, eh?--the foreclosing.

And those days, you have to know little bit about the law--commerical law--so I stick my nose in politics. So, I make friends with politicians--lawyers. I had my first Japanese lawyer. Hilo guy--Okino. He was working under this Martin Pence. You know Martin Pence, the. . . .

WN: Circuit judge? [Martin Pence is presently U.S. District Court judge.]

YN: Yeah, yeah. He was working under Martin Pence. So, you got to play with the politician. So, when politics time. . . . In those days, about \$1,500, \$2,000, I used to pay when he come to Kona. In those days, you had to buy their vote, eh? Especially those Hawaiians, like that. Those days, plenty Hawaiians.

WN: So, you had to pay \$1,500 for what?

YN: For campaign fund. You go Hoopuloa, like that, you get Hawaiians, eh? Take 'em beer. And Hookena. Over there, plenty Hawaiians, too. So, we had to buy out the. . . . Buy everything! (Laughs)

WN: Who you campaigned for?

YN: Martin Pence. And Okino. Until Okino come to judge, then we don't have to play politics. He's under salary--a government employee. Today, county attorney is under government pay. Those days, no-- [it was by] election.

WN: Okino helped you in the business?

YN: Oh, yeah. He know anything. Not business, only law.

WN: Like what kind things you had to know about law?

YN: Sometimes, we have to make a contract, like that. Those kind things, we have to know. So, the bugga is a criminal lawyer. But I ask him [for help]. [He said], "I got to study little bit. Give me two weeks, no?" Like that. (Chuckles) And then, he used to give me advice. And me, those kind, we don't know. Lawyers, they can do anything. (Chuckles) Criminal lawyer and businessman lawyer, that's different, but. Last year, he died, though.

WN: Oh, Okino?

YN: Yeah.

WN: When you had your own coffee mill, the farmers that sold to you were the same farmers that sold to you when you leased the mill in Kailua?

YN: Yeah, yeah. [But] those days, not too much [business]. So, gradually we pick up. Get about 100 gurai.

WN: Hundred farmers?

YN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: You know, I heard one story about farmers, during depression time, they used to owe. . . . If they got groceries from AmFac, they had to sell their coffee to AmFac. Did you get some farmers who sell to you . . .

YN: Oh, yeah. Sure. Yeah, (chuckles) I had that.

WN: What did you do?

YN: Pick up their coffee. Because parchment, eh? They no can find, American Factors. Unless you get the proof, they cannot. . . . So, those kind things, I have to get the lawyer, eh? "Eh, in case of

this kind, what we going do?"

He tell, "No need worry." As long as no more proof, eh?

WN: But how come no more proof? I mean, you get more coffee.

(Laughter)

WN: You used to pick up coffee late at night or something like that?

YN: No, no. In this kind bag. (YN points to coffee bag.) They used to have a name. Those kind of coffee, no name, eh? (Laughs)

WN: You used to pay 'em cash?

YN: Oh, yeah. Cash. And gradually, you come in. Then, when hard, we have to furnish those guys supplies, no?

WN: Oh, you did that?

YN: Oh, yeah. Zutto. Even now, today. So, always, you have to have at least \$10,000 worth of . . . Now, even this, no more about \$3,000, \$4,000. (Chuckles) Expensive stuff, that.

WN: What kind supplies you supplied them with?

YN: Fertilizer. Fertilizer, we don't have to keep, but, no? We order from A.C. Brewer.

WN: Fertilizer, what else?

YN: Fertilizer and this.

WN: Poison?

YN: Oh, yeah. Poison, mostly. Round Up, and Paraquat, and 2-4D. Most, about three kinds. You get gallon, you know, cost. . . .

WN: Round Up?

YN: Round Up. We sell it to the farmers--only \$67.

WN: Sixty-seven dollars for one gallon of Round Up?

YN: Yeah. Taniguchi, over there, they selling for \$70-something dollars. They have to make profit.

WN: But you folks co-op, yeah?

YN: Co-op, yeah. No, if we make money, we have to refund. Every year, we have to refund.

WN: When you had your own mill before the co-op time, did you supply-- not only fertilizer--but did you supply things like groceries, like that?

YN: No, no, no, no, no groceries. We not allowed to. Only for the farm use. Cooperatives, farmers' cooperatives, cannot.

WN: But before farmers' cooperatives.

YN: Then, you can, but, no, we don't want.

WN: You didn't do it?

YN: I was going [to] do it. But I think twice. Sell those groceries, like that, if they [farmers] no going pay, you be the sucker. So, you know that building over there? (YN points to nearby structure.) Over there, my friend had five acres and he want to sell one acre. So, I like make a store. So, I bought over there. I said, "Half acre is good enough." Five thousand dollars, in those days, big money, though. And then, keep, keep, instead of. . . . Oh, yeah, I had a small building. Kore no really small. Seven years ago, I sold this half acre to a schoolteacher. I sold for \$43,500. (Laughs)

WN: Just the land, or had building on 'em?

YN: Small building. About \$200, \$300 kind of building, we had. So, he wants to buy, okay. "But," I said, "you cannot pay one time. Ten years, you pay me." Ten years. So, three more years, he have to pay me. Then, I don't have to pay tax too much.

WN: So, you never had one store, then?

YN: No, no. I was going to do, but I was thinking, "Damn, you never can, no?" You try to furnish those kaukaus and those to the farmers, you get stuck.

WN: So, instead, you got farmers to sell to you by giving them more and in cash?

YN: Yeah.

WN: Any other things you did to convince farmers to sell to you?

YN: No. Main thing is the price, eh? Today, even mac nut, [there is] competition. Went up, went up, went up. Fierce. But, because I wen suffer in farming, so, always, I had to think of the farmers.

My friend, he making the nuts, too, in Hilo. Honolulu, they doing. Tom Horiuchi. Maybe you know him; maybe you don't know. Five H Island Food. Small. Now, he going big. I helping, that's why.

WN: Because mac nut?

YN: Mac nut candy. "To do that," I tell him, "you have to sell [at] good price, and you have to pay to the farmers--main thing. I going help you." So, he might owe 'em half million dollars, always. But he don't have to worry, eh? At least [for] two months, we don't have to pay the farmers. They trust us.

WN: Oh, yeah? You don't have to pay right when they give you the [mac nuts]?

YN: No, no. No, no.

WN: When you had your own mill before the co-op, how many employees did you have?

YN: My own mill? Only one.

WN: Oh, yeah? Only you?

YN: Yeah. I have to work, and I have to, no? Ima demo, coffee, only one guy. I get two guys for mac nut--driver and. . . .

WN: So, you used to pulp the coffee yourself, and dry 'em, and everything?

YN: No, that one, only we bring the parchment. We pulp, that's all.

WN: Just pulp?

YN: Yeah, pulp. Machine going do everything. When come to about 100 pound, you scale 'em.

WN: So, no need dry 'em, then?

YN: No, no. Like the Sunset [Co-op] over there, oh, they need plenty guys. They have to bring the cherry from the farm. Very expensive.

WN: Why did you form the co-op?

YN: You know why? Still they have, I don't know. We call "Donkey Mill." You know [in] Honalo? He get one donkey on the [roof of the mill]. He form a cooperative. In the beginning, you don't give a heck, because they don't know how to sell. But, gradually, they come smart. Then, they might pick our farmers. So, okay, might as well we make 'em a cooperative. So, my own time [i.e., before the cooperative was started], I used to make money. Now, only I'm sucker--salary. (Laughs) Before we formed a cooperative, I used to make money. So, I could afford to send my kid to college. Five kids, I send 'em all to Mainland. Now, salary, even I cannot send one kid to college. (Laughs)

WN: That's the only reason why you decided to make co-op? Because the

Donkey Mill made the co-op?

YN: Yes, yes, yes. Always you have to respect the enemy, eh? Never can tell what going happen.

WN: What about Sunset? Sunset formed same time?

YN: Same time, same time.

WN: What's the difference between the co-op and a mill? What's the advantages of a co-op, in other words, to the farmer?

YN: Naturally, they're [farmers] the boss, cooperative, no? Everything what we sell, they get 'em. If my own [mill], what[ever] I bought. . . . Me, I never lost, but, no? So, every year, even this year I don't know, last year demo. End of the year, if get additional. . . . So, last year, we pay back \$43,000 to [the farmers].

WN: But you don't have to pay taxes?

YN: No. Because the farmers going to. We don't have to. Only we pay the ten-dollar license, that's all.

WN: What's the differences between Pacific and Sunset?

YN: Same thing, supposed to be.

WN: But you folks take in only parchment [coffee]?

YN: Yeah. Them, cherry, too.

WN: Sunset takes cherry?

YN: Yeah. Practically 90 percent, 95 percent is cherry.

WN: How come you folks don't take cherry?

YN: Too much trouble. From cherry, you have to have two drivers to pick up. And then, you have to husk the cherry and you have to dry. And the more you get employee, the more trouble. They trying to form a union, eh?

WN: So, all the farmers that are members of the Pacific Co-op all have their own facilities?

YN: Yeah, yeah. Until parchment [stage]. Those days, they used to have only [drying] platform. We call "hoshidana." We get a dryer, a big one. That was made by Hilo--nowdays, what they call this--Hilo Ironworks. He made for us. I had a friend over there, one Portuguese. He was a blacksmith or something. He used to help us, trouble, eh? Each farmer wants the dryer. My friend, his boss is [in] Honolulu. And they made the machine. All--terrific. I

don't know, was \$1,500, one machine. They made about, I think, 300.

WN: Three hundred machines?

YN: Machine--dryer.

WN: Sold to the farmers?

YN: Farmers, yeah.

WN: With the co-op, can you folks sell equipment and fertilizer cheaper?

YN: Oh, yeah. No make difference. [If] you sell 'em at a big profit, then, end of the year, we have to pay 'em back, eh? But, if possible, to our members, we have to sell at the same price as the dealers. Then, we can give 'em dividends. Otherwise, [it's] more like we giving trouble to the businessman. These cooperatives are under the Department of Ag [Agriculture], so the Department of Ag got to ask, if possible, same price with others, and give 'em dividend. And mendōkusai [troublesome], that's why.

(Laughter)

WN: You said, 1956 [or] 1957, the Pacific Co-op was formed, yeah? In this same mill area, yeah?

YN: Yeah.

WN: How do you start a co-op? What had to be done to change from a [private] milling operation to a co-op?

YN: Easy. Just give to the lawyer, and they make the form. So, then, now, they're [farmers] the boss, eh? So, at least twice a year, they have this meeting. Sometime, [when] I cannot make [a] decision, we have to call [a meeting], you know.

WN: How was your salary paid? Is there a fee that you charge the farmers that can pay for your salary?

YN: Yeah, yeah. (YN looks through papers.) Kono [this was] additional. Oh, yeah, this was additional, end of the year. How much he get?

WN: "Five-six-three-twenty-seven [\$56,327]."

YN: Yeah, additional.

WN: That's his fee?

YN: No. They send the coffee; we paid already, no? And end of the year, difference, this is the difference. So, we call it "additional," eh?

WN: Oh, you pay him [farmers] this much extra?

YN: Yeah, yeah. Every one. Depend on the big ones and small ones.

WN: But a farmer brings the coffee to you. You folks pay him certain amount. I don't understand what "additional" means.

YN: For instance, he [farmers] bring parchment. If we buy the parchment and we sell the parchment, then, exact [amount], we know. [But if] we bring the parchment; we mill and make green coffee [out of it], you cannot go exact, eh? So, difference, end of the year, we pay 'em those.

WN: Oh, you cannot tell exactly how much he sold?

YN: No, no, no, no. Because hard. But, always, you have to figure, you have to pay [the farmer] less. Never can tell with the market fluctuation.

WN: They squawk, some farmers?

YN: Now. Them damn fool buggas. Fierce price, they trying. Without asking, they selling to others [i.e., private millers]. "Oh, if that's the case, you guys sell [to others]. I'm not the loser--you guys the loser. I'm under salary." (Laughs) If come like that, I get disgusted. I'm old already, so I tell 'em, "Dissolve this co-op." Because if members going to this way and that way, no sense have a cooperative.

WN: How many members today?

YN: About 100.

WN: You folks having any problems today with competition? I see that United Coffee Mill up there?

YN: Yeah. That's the trouble. So, last Sunday, we had a meeting. "What we going do?"

"We'll fight."

"Okay, if that's the case, we going to do it." But this bugga, damn fool, that's why, no more limit, you know. He's not a businessman. (Chuckles)

We used to have contract with Superior [Tea & Coffee Company]. This Superior, he doesn't want to pay [for the coffee]. If that's the case, we not giving him coffee. But [since] there's a contract, I say, "This Pacific [Cooperative] not going handle coffee. We not going handle, but I going handle under my name." Then, we can sell anyplace. And this mill was leased to the cooperative. "So, cancel everything."

WN: Oh, that's what you going to do?

YN: Yeah. And Superior get excited. We figure, we not giving [coffee] because with the [low] price, no? He want to lease this mill.
"Oh, yeah. If you want to, I lease to you guys."

"How much?" he said.

"Oh, \$650 a month."

"Okay."

So, the one [who] runs [Superior] in Hawaii, he went to the Mainland. He's coming on Monday. Friday, paper, everything--lease paper. So, we don't have to handle coffee. Competition humbug, yeah? So, "Now, members, all up to you guys. If you like sell, sell anyplace."

WN: So, they selling?

YN: Oh, yeah, naturally, they selling. Ima, the ones [coming] over here [every] one week, two weeks, those guys are our really honto no [true] members. "No need worry," I said, "any amount, the price, we can match." But, always, we have to find the market. [If] you promise and you no can sell, what? One container, I sold--I figure, one container, about 450 [bags], so they bought that. And plenty more--another 400 bags. So, I wait [for] the Japan buyer. He's coming on the seventh. So, we have to negotiate that.

WN: So, the markets in mac nuts are all here and in Japan?

YN: Mac nut, 90 percent is given to candy company in Honolulu.

WN: Hawaiian Host?

YN: No, Tom Horiuchi. We have to, because this Hawaiian Host capitalists get plenty money. So, competition. They have to raise the price.

WN: So, you're saying that right now, you're doing what percent of mac nuts compared to coffee?

YN: I think, this year, 60 percent, and coffee is going to be 40 percent. Other year was about same. Money values, I don't know. Coffee was half million, and nut was half million dollars.

WN: What you think the future of coffee is in Kona?

YN: Within ten years, very small percentage. Small. The main thing is, how you going to harvest? Twenty years ago, I told 'em we cannot. Young guys, they not working the farm. Those days, we used to have Filipino [labor]. Now, no more, you know. Coming old, eh? They get social security or welfare.

WN: So, what's going happen to all the lands?

YN: They planting mac nuts. Twenty years ago, the one [who] listen to me, they planted. Now, coffee [trees], they cut [down]. No more coffee now. All, they get the nuts. The slow guys, now, I think about five years, three years. So, gradually, within five years, no more coffee. Because if you cannot harvest, no sense. Even good money [i.e., prices] demo, no? Because young guys, they don't want to work on the farm. Me, myself, too, I don't want to. So, I send my kids all to. . . . "You go to Mainland. Stay over there, don't come back," I told 'em. (Chuckles)

WN: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Noguchi.

YN: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

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